(f) and (g) State-wise details of production of tea during the last three years are as follows :

Production (Qty in mn. kgs.)

Name of the states	1998-99	1997-98	1996-97
Assam	449.02	438.76	419.25
West Bengal	191.20	177.10	160.00
Tamil Nadu	124.31	134.44	118.42
Kerala	69.58	72.37	63.42
Other States	16.14	15.35	14.22
ALL INDIA	850.25	838.02	775.31

(*Source* : Tea Board)

Phasing out DEPB Scheme under WTO Agreement

2451. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that in view of the forthcoming WTO agreements, the DEPB scheme may have to be phased out; and

(b) what alternative plans Government have made to protect exports?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) with a view to achieving simplification of duty neutralization mechanisms and procedures, it has been decided to phase out the DEPB scheme with effect from 31-03-2002.

(b) From 1st April, 2002 onwards, exporters shall be reimbursed the indirect taxes and duties, paid on inputs, at the time of shipment itself, through one Duty Drawback Scheme.

News items captioned "Seagrams cashes in policy confusion buys distillery"

2452. SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :